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Human rights questions: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America: draft resolution

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on the subject, in particular its resolutions 52/129 of 12 December 1997, 50/185 of 22 December 1995 and 49/190 of 23 December 1994,

Reaffirming that United Nations electoral assistance and support for the promotion of democratization are provided only at the specific request of the Member State concerned,

Acknowledging that United Nations electoral assistance has facilitated the holding of successful elections in several Member States, which has resulted in the orderly and non-violent assumption of office by elected officials, recognizing that elections can be free and fair only if the secrecy of the ballot is protected and elections are held free of coercion and intimidation, and underlining the importance of respect for the results of elections that have been verified as free and fair,

Noting with satisfaction that increasing numbers of Member States are using elections as peaceful means of national decision-making and confidence-building, thereby contributing to greater national peace and stability,

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Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948,[1] in particular the right to freely choose representatives through periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and held by secret vote or equivalent free voting procedures,

Recalling also Commission on Human Rights resolution 1999/57 of 27 April 1999,[2] in which, *inter alia*, the Commission urges the continuation and expansion of activities carried out by the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and Member States to promote and consolidate democracy within the framework of international cooperation and to build a democratic political culture through the observance of human rights, mobilization of civil society and other appropriate measures in support of democratic governance,

Recognizing the usefulness of a comprehensive and balanced approach in the activities carried out by the United Nations in this field in order to contribute to the strengthening of both democracy and all human rights within the country concerned,

Recognizing the need for strengthening national capacity-building, electoral institutions and civic education in the requesting countries in order to consolidate and regularize the achievements of previous elections and support subsequent elections,

Recalling the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993,[3] in particular the recognition therein that assistance provided upon the request of Governments for the conduct of free and fair elections is of particular importance in the strengthening of a pluralistic civil society,

Welcoming the support provided by States to the electoral assistance activities of the United Nations, *inter alia*, through the provision of electoral experts, including electoral commission staff, and observers, as well as through contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, in collaboration with other electoral assistance organizations and United Nations agencies, to gather and make available through electronic means information on and for national election administrators, processes and institutions,

Noting the regional conference for Central Asian election administrators, held at Almaty in November 1998, and the Global Electoral Organization Network conference held at Ottawa in April 1999,

Welcoming the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held at Cotonou in 2000, and calling upon the international community, including the Electoral Assistance Division in its role as coordinator of United Nations electoral assistance, the United Nations Development Programme and other relevant organizations and institutions to render all possible assistance to ensure the successful outcome of the Conference,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations activities aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections,[4]

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[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 3* (E/1999/23), chap. II, sect. A.

[3] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[4] A/54/491.

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations activities aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections;[4]

2. *Commends* the electoral assistance provided upon request to Member States by the United Nations, and requests that such assistance continue on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the evolving needs of requesting countries to improve and refine their electoral institutions and processes, and with the guidelines on electoral assistance, recognizing that the fundamental responsibility of organizing free and fair elections lies with Governments;

3. *Requests* the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat to continue to inform Member States on a regular basis about the requests received, responses given to those requests and the nature of the assistance provided;

4. *Requests* that the United Nations continue its efforts to ensure, before undertaking to provide electoral assistance to a requesting State, that there is adequate time to organize and carry out an effective mission for providing such assistance, that conditions exist to allow a free and fair election and that provisions can be made for adequate and comprehensive reporting of the results of the mission;

5. *Recommends* that the Electoral Assistance Division continue to provide technical advice before and after elections and post-election assistance, as appropriate, based on needs assessment missions, to requesting States and electoral institutions, in order to contribute to the sustainability of their electoral processes and consolidation of the democratization process;

6. *Also recommends* that United Nations electoral assistance be geared towards comprehensive observation of the entire time-span of the electoral process in instances where more than technical assistance is required by the requesting State;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take further steps to support States that request assistance by, *inter alia*, enabling the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in accordance with her mandate, to support democratization activities related to human rights concerns, including human rights training and education, assistance for human rights-related legislative reform, strengthening and reform of the judiciary, assistance to national human rights institutions and advisory services on treaty accession, reporting and international obligations as related to human rights;

8. *Requests* the United Nations Development Programme to continue its commendable programmes of assistance for governance in cooperation with other relevant organizations and institutions, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular those for strengthening democratic institutions and participation and linkages between concerned sectors of society and Governments;

9. *Recalls* the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, and calls upon Member States to consider contributing to the Fund;

10. *Reiterates* the importance of reinforced coordination within the United Nations system, including cooperation with all relevant departments within the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Volunteers, and encourages the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, as the focal point for United Nations electoral assistance activities, supported by the Electoral Assistance Division, to continue

to develop new and more effective mechanisms for cooperation, and to strengthen its collaboration with those entities, including through an exchange of personnel when appropriate;

11. *Notes with appreciation* additional efforts being made to enhance cooperation with other international, governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate more comprehensive and need-specific responses to requests for electoral assistance, and expresses appreciation to those Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations that have provided observers or technical experts in support of United Nations electoral assistance efforts;

12. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Electoral Assistance Division, to respond to the evolving nature of requests for assistance and the growing need for specific types of medium-term expert assistance aimed at supporting and strengthening the existing capacity of the requesting Government, in particular through enhancing the capacity of national electoral institutions;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide the Electoral Assistance Division with adequate human and financial resources to allow it to carry out its mandate, and to continue to ensure that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is able to respond, within its mandate and in close coordination with the Electoral Assistance Division, to the increasing number of requests from Member States for advisory services;

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution, in particular on the status of requests from Member States for electoral assistance and verification, and on his efforts to enhance the Organization's support of the democratization process in Member States.